

WHY NURSERY RHYMES?

Songs and rhymes for young children have been passed down for generations. They're fun, children love them and they provide a warm nurturing experience between parent and child. What we may not be aware of as we say simple nursery rhymes or sing songs with them is their ENORMOUS educational value. Here are some of the ways fingerplays, rhymes, chants and songs teach children concepts, skills, and even provide emotional support.

1. **Language Development.** As children recite rhymes and sing songs, they are learning new vocabulary, and also how to articulate words, modulate their voices and enunciate clearly. They are simultaneously practicing pitch, volume, and voice inflection while experiencing the rhythm of language. They learn to pronounce words easily by saying them over and over again and by practicing them without effort or the pressures of criticism.
2. **Reading Skills.** In almost all fingerplays, the hands move from left to right. This left-to-right directional motion is important for children to experience, since it prepares them for the order of the written word in English. (And when you read to your children, let them follow your finger tracing the words so they also absorb this concept from the written words in the book.) A second important reading concept that children must experience fully before they can become good readers is story sequence. They need to absorb how the sequence of what happened first, second, third, and last, etc. affects the story, so they can re-tell it in the order the events occurred.
3. **Math Concepts.** There is frequent use of counting in young children's songs and rhymes, in both a forward and backward direction. Children learn to add as they count forward, and subtract as they count backward. Other stories and songs explore words that describe size (Billy Goats Gruff), weight (The Three Bears), and use math related words to define concepts such as many, few, plenty, etc. This contributes to the child's basic math foundation, which will later help in math abstractions.
4. **Creative Dramatization.** Rhymes and songs provide great building blocks for creative dramatics. Children love to act out the rhymes as they say them, dramatizing the actions of the characters with their whole bodies, or by using their hands and fingers. When children are encouraged by an adult to display their creativity in an atmosphere that is free of criticism, their sense of self is strengthened and their confidence in expressing themselves is increased.
5. **Comfort and Support.** Nursery rhymes and songs are "places" young children can retreat to when they feel lonely, sad or bewildered by their world. If a child is away from Mom or Dad and feeling alone, they can call upon that song they shared, and be reminded of the times and the feelings they had when they sang it together.

Nursery rhymes and songs can be used anywhere, at any time and, as such, they are one of our most transportable forms of play. So, which nursery rhymes do you choose to sing or recite to baby? Perhaps this guide will help.

Birth to 3 months: During this development period your child may enjoy movements to help know their body, important people in their life, and surrounding environment. Developing close bonds with caregivers is what's important. Try activities such as "This Little Piggy Went to Market", "Hickory Dickory Dock" or "Round and Round the Garden". Sing lullabies like "Rock-a-Bye Baby", "Bye Baby Bunting", "Hush Little Baby" or "All Through the Night" while rocking and cuddling your child. Use nursery rhymes such as "Georgie Porgie Pudding and Pie", "Hey Diddle, Diddle" and "Little Miss Muffet". Often baby can be calmed by a gentle, human voice.

3 to 6 Months: Most babies at this stage are very social and eager to learn all there is about their world. A child can communicate, with different cries, boredom, frustration, hunger, impatience or discomfort, and will babble & experiment with different sounds for self-entertainment. Knee ride songs are great at this stage such as, "To Market, To Market", "Ride A Cock Horse", "Trot, Trot, Trot, Trot". Try saying rhymes as your baby is bathed such as, "Rub-a-Dub-Dub". "Eensy, Weensy Spider" is another well-known rhyme, song and finger play. You might enjoy dancing with your baby to songs like, "The Bear Went Over the Mountain", "You Are My Sunshine", "Teddy Bears' Picnic", etc. Try reciting nursery rhymes such as "Old King Cole", "There Was a Crooked Man" or "There Was an Old Woman". "Pat-Cake" is another popular interactive game.

6 to 9 Months: At this stage baby is becoming much more mobile - sitting, crawling, standing and getting into everything! Baby's constant babbling is beginning to sound more like real words. Their "baby-talk" has a range of tones similar to adults such as questions, commands and descriptions. Knee bouncing rhymes as well as ankle rides are often enjoyed now. For example, "Tom, Tom the Piper's Son" and "Humpty Dumpty". When washing you might use songs such as "This is the Way We Wash Our Hands". You could introduce simple instruments to accompany your songs like a pot and wooden spoon for a drum, a shaker, rhythm sticks or bells. Other suggestions: "A-Hunting We Will Go", "The Grand Old Duke of York" and "She'll be Coming 'Round the Mountain". For rhymes use, "See Saw Marjory Daw", "To Market, To Market" and "Leg Over Leg".

9 to 12 Months: Now baby will be climbing, crawling, cruising & possibly walking. It's important to talk to your child about everything and to provide names for things. They are imitating language and some words may even sound like real words, and are starting to recognize, and use meaningfully, the rhythms, tones and facial expressions of language. Try adding these action games - "Jack and Jill", "Head and Shoulders", "Old McDonald Had a Farm", "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", etc. As interest in words grow continue reciting nonsense verse and more complex rhymes so they hear the richness in their language. Even tongue twisters are great like, "Peter Piper". Some rhymes like, "The Muffin Man", "Jack Sprat", and "Little Tommy Tucker" are good to try; and reading stories, longer nursery rhymes or rhymes such as Dr. Seuss can be part of your child's bedtime routine.

When using nursery songs & rhymes with our child, we are engaged in a social routine that encourages *turn-taking* skills (critical for the [development of conversation](#)). We foster responsiveness and, through repetition, we help them learn to anticipate what's coming next. Young children are able to respond to rhythm and tone before they understand language but both have a common foundation of tone patterns, stress and rhythm. The words used in nursery rhymes and songs help a child develop language comprehension as they learn to associate key words with people, objects and events in their daily lives.

Source: "Nursery Rhymes, Songs and Early Language Development", Frances Monro, Senior Speech-Language Pathologist, Interior Health Authority

A caterpillar crawled to the top of a tree.	(Extend left arm. Wiggle right index finger up your arm.)
"I think I'll take a nap," said he.	(Pretend right index finger is talking.)
So under a leaf he began to creep.	(Wrap left hand around right index finger.)
He spun a chrysalis and he fell asleep.	
For six long months he slept in his chrysalis bed,	
Until spring finally came along and said,	
"Wake up, wake up, you sleepy head."	(Shake left fist.)
Out of the leaf he did cry,	(Hook thumbs together. Extend fingers
"Look, I've become a butterfly!"	and wiggle like wings.)

Make this butterfly puppet to engage children's attention.



Glue pom poms for eyes and a nose on the outside of an old sock for a caterpillar.
 Glue a felt butterfly on the inside toe of the sock.
 Begin the poem with your hand inside the sock so the caterpillar is seen.
 When the caterpillar spins a chrysalis, pull the cuff back over the head.
 To reveal the butterfly, turn the sock inside out.



Let the children make "butterflies."

Have children take off their shoes, stand on a piece of paper, cross their legs, and trace around their feet.
 They can cut out their feet, then decorate them with markers, paint, or collage materials.
 (On a warm day, it's fun to let children step in paint with their bare feet to make butterfly footprints.)



ZOOMplayhouse: *The Plays* *You've Seen on ZOOM*

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Nursery Rhymes with a Twist

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By Mother Goose, with some help from the ZOOMers

CAST:

Mother Goose

Jack

Jill

Cat

Cow

Dog

2 Rhythm Clappers

2 Bakers

PROPS/COSTUMES:

Cardboard sun and moon, a cake, a pie, rocking chair, book titled "Nursery Rhymes with a Twist", rocking chair for Mother Goose.

Costumes: Mother Goose like clothing and little reading glasses.

Matching Jack and Jill hats, face make-up for Cat, Cow and Dog. 2

baker's hats, hat for Little Jack Horner.

SETTING: Outdoors.

(Mother Goose, off to the side, is reading from a book of nursery rhymes and rocking back and forth in a rocking chair. Jack and Jill go up the hill and Jill pretends to snowboard. Sun is shining behind scene.)

Mother Goose:

Jack and Jill went up the hill, to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came snow boarding after!

Mother Goose:

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. Cat, Cow and Dog take positions and act out rhyme.)

Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon; the little dog laughed to see such sport, and then he tried it the next afternoon.

Mother Goose:

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. Moon is passed to Dog and Cow which they turn into a cake. Rhythm Clappers clap to the song Bakers present cake to Rhythm Clappers.)

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man bake me a cake as fast as you can; pat it and prick it, and mark it with a Z and put it on the table for the ZOOMers and me.

Mother Goose:

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. Clapper passes cake to Baker which he turns into a pie.)

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner eating his holiday pie he stuck in his thumb and pulled out a strawberry and said!

Little Jack Horner:

Hey, what happened to the plum?

Mother Goose:

I hope you enjoyed "Nursery Rhymes with a Twist," by me, Mother Goose, and the ZOOMers.

The End

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